## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## COUNTY COMMISSIONERS INVEST IN STUDENTS' FUTURES

Franklin County Commissioner Marilyn Brown spoke today at a meeting of 25 Whitehall Yearling seniors who are participating in the Stepping Off To College program sponsored by the county commissioners. The program is a joint effort of the county, Whitehall City Schools, PNC Bank, and Greater Columbus Community Helping Hands, and funded by a \$26,280 grant from the county's Economic Development and Planning Department.

As part of the program, student participants complete courses in College Entry Readiness, Financial Aid, Financial Literacy, Social Skills, Health, Computer Literacy, and more. They are also encouraged to save for the future, including for an investment in a computer and supplies. When the students enroll at the college of their choice, Stepping Off To College will provide each with a laptop computer, printer, school and dorm supplies, and 3 years of tech-support worth \$1,340 in return for the students' \$200 investment.

Commissioner Brown congratulated the Whitehall students on their achievements thus far, and challenged them to maintain the focus and drive that have helped them get this far as they complete the program and proceed through college. She also encouraged them to return to Franklin County when they graduate in a few years.

"Our students in Central Ohio have so much potential," said Commissioner Brown. "Stepping Off To College is way to help to prepare them for the future, and to make sure they have the tools, both physical and educational, that they're going to need to succeed. It's a community investment in their futures, but also in our community's future as these students will return to become leaders throughout the county. It's going to be really exciting to see what these great students make of themselves."

Specific classes for Stepping Off To College participants focus on Time Management and Navigating the College Environment, Understanding Financial Aid and Scheduling Classes, Budgeting and Managing Credit, and Computer Training and Responsible Use of Social Media.

"We are proud of the Whitehall student body, and their efforts to seize their future! This county assistance will be a valuable tool for their families to use while helping their students navigate complicated college and career decision making. We are confident that these Whitehall families will achieve a good outcome for their children," said Commissioner Paula Brooks.

All of the student participants this year are expected to attend college in the fall of 2015. Their universities of choice include The Ohio State University, Columbus State Community College, Ohio University, the University of Cincinnati, the University of Louisville, Wright State, Akron, Full Sail University, the University of Illinois, and New York University.

"Navigating college is tough enough," said Commissioner John O'Grady. "Having the skills to manage one's time and money effectively can make all the difference when it comes to success in the classroom, and a computer is as essential today as a notebook and pencil when I was in school. Being able to help these kids purchase those should be a big help, and we know they're all going to do really well."

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